



Carol  
Campbell/R8/USEPA/US  
06/17/2009 04:32 PM

To "Penney Trujillo" <Trujillo.Penney@epamail.epa.gov>

cc

bcc

Subject Fw: FYI - E & E PM Edition: SUPERFUND: Obama admin  
declares health emergency in Libby, Mont.

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Sent by EPA Wireless E-Mail Services  
Sandy Fells

----- Original Message -----

From: Sandy Fells

Sent: 06/17/2009 03:18 PM MDT

To: R8 SLT

Cc: Bill Murray; Russell Leclerc; Richard Mylott; Wendy Chipp; Laura  
Niles; Wendy Dew; Tim Davis; Sonya Pennock; Ted Linnert; Mike Cirian; John  
Wardell; Victor Ketellapper; Andy Lensink

Subject: FYI - E & E PM Edition: SUPERFUND: Obama admin declares health  
emergency in Libby, Mont.

From this afternoon's *Environment & Energy PM Edition* ...

## **SUPERFUND: Obama admin declares health emergency in Libby, Mont.**

Taryn Luntz, E&E reporter

The Obama administration declared a public health emergency today for a Montana town contaminated by asbestos, the first such use of the Superfund law.

The declaration by U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson and Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius opens the door for federal medical and cleanup resources for people suffering what Jackson called a "unique public health tragedy."

"This is a tragic public health situation that has not received the recognition it deserves by the federal government for far too long," Jackson said.

Nearly 200 residents have died and many more have suffered from asbestos-related diseases as the result of vermiculite mining by W.R. Grace & Co. People were exposed through the extensive use of vermiculite insulation in their homes and the use of mine waste as fill for driveways, gardens and playgrounds.

The disease and death rate from asbestosis in the Libby area for decades has been "staggeringly higher" than the national average, Jackson said.

The company closed the mine in 1990.

Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), who has long advocated for more federal resources for the remote timber town, last fall said an investigation by his office found EPA had been ready to declare a

public health emergency for the site before the Bush White House intervened (E&ENews PM , Sept. 25, 2008).

At Jackson's confirmation hearing in January, Baucus elicited a pledge from her to reconsider the declaration.

Baucus said today, "This is truly a historic day for the people of Libby, Mont., for justice, for the U.S. government standing up and doing what's right."

Jackson said the extent of the contamination in Libby, combined with the residents' limited access to health care, prompted the decision, the first such declaration in the 29-year history of Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, which is commonly known as the Superfund law.

"I'm not naïve enough to think that others won't ask us," Jackson said of the declaration. "I won't say that there isn't potentially another situation out there."